



New York Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program

Customer Focus

The Sweetman Farm, owned by Tunis and Sharon Sweetman, is situated in New York's Scenic Hudson River Valley. Sweetman's father was a dairy farmer who relocated here after the family farm in New Jersey was sold to developers. "It really hurt to see that farmland destroyed and the pasture I used to play in become roads and houses," says Tunis.

Located in Orange County, the 108-acre Sweetman Farm was purchased using matching funds from USDA's Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) and New York Department of Agriculture and Market's Farmland Protection Program. By placing a perpetual easement on the farmland, the Sweetmans were able to buy the farmland they had been renting.

The removal of development rights reduced the land's value for development, allowing the Sweetmans to buy the land at its lower agricultural value, an option that they otherwise could not afford.

The family's farmland protection advocacy did not stop at the farm gates. In November 2000, with the help of Tunis Sweetman, the Town of Warwick established its own farmland protection program with voter approval of a \$9.5 million ballot initiative.

"The goal is to preserve 3,000 acres to give our town enough of an agricultural base to remain viable...At a young age, I became aware of what happened when there are no more farms. I felt it was worth fighting for—and it has been a fight," says Sweetman.

Overview:

The USDA Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) helps farmers and ranchers keep their productive land in agriculture. The program partners with States, Tribes, local governments and non-profit organizations to purchase conservation easements for the purpose of protecting topsoil by limiting non-agricultural uses of the land. NRCS provides up to 50% of the fair market value of the easement to the cooperating entity, which acquires, manages, and enforces the easement. Landowners participate voluntarily, and protected farms remain in private ownership.

Conservation plans are developed on all highly erodible cropland. Nationally, over \$101.3 million have been obligated to state and local entities since establishment of the program in 1996. The 2002 Farm Bill produced some changes in the program, including the addition of a provision providing for the protection of historical and archaeological resources on farm and ranchlands, and the inclusion of nongovernmental organizations as eligible entities. The Farm Bill also significantly increased the amount of financial assistance available under FRPP, authorizing nearly \$600 million through Fiscal Year 2007. Sixty-seven million dollars was allocated to states to purchase easements in FY 2003.

Accomplishments:

Cooperating entities' proposals are selected through a competitive process designed to protect parcels that will help accomplish FRPP and local land use goals. FRPP easements protect entire working farms, woodlands, wetlands, important natural areas, and historical and cultural resources. Through FY 2002, \$3.8 million in FRPP funds have been awarded to purchase easements on approximately 5,943 acres of valuable agricultural land in New York.

Due to increasing development pressure throughout the state, requests for FRPP funds have increased dramatically in recent years, far outpacing the program's funding capacity. In FY 2003, partners in New York requested \$21,670,775 in FRPP funds. This request represents 33 percent of the total amount of FRPP funds available nationwide in FY 2003. New York was allocated \$2,235,000 to purchase conservation easements in FY 2003.

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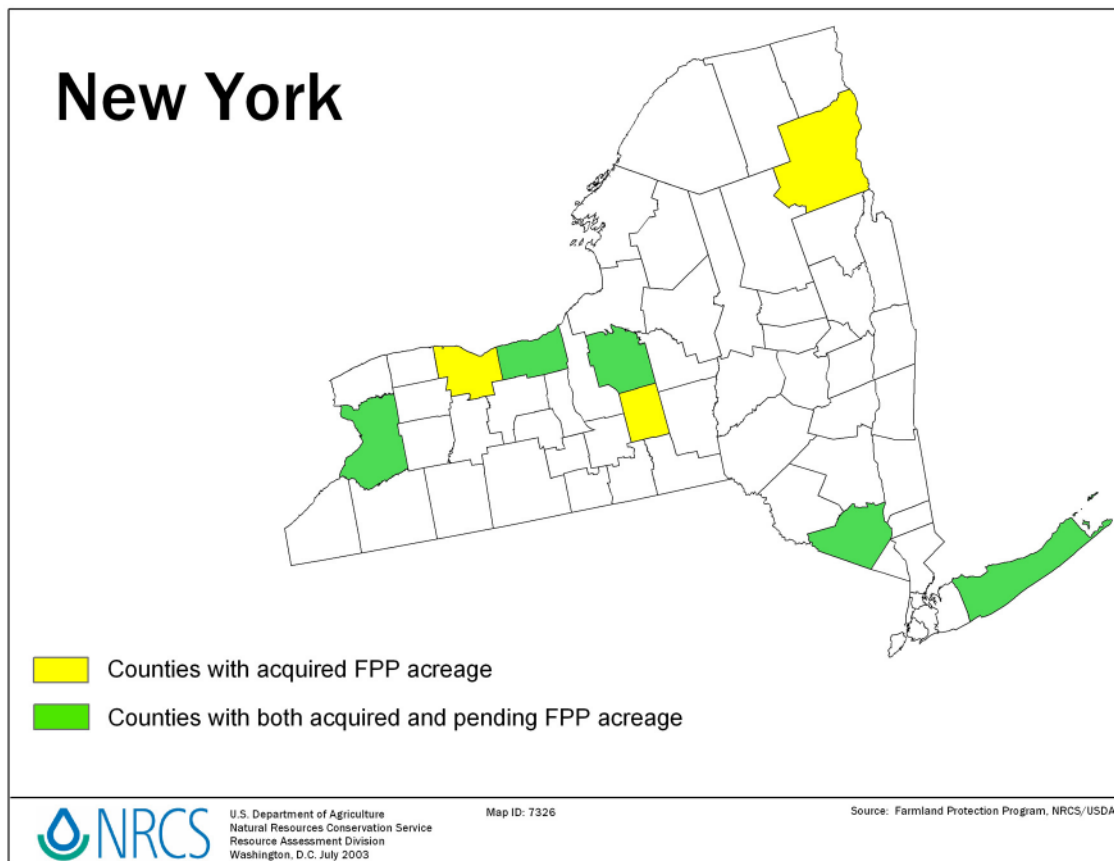
The American Farmland Trust recently named three New York regions among the 20 most threatened agricultural areas in the nation. Between 1982 and 1997, approximately 1.9 million acres of farmland was converted to non-agricultural uses in New York. In 1996, the state established a farmland protection program in an attempt to stem this conversion. The program's efforts have been hampered recently by tight budgets, shrinking tax revenues and a growing gap between the number of farmers who want to conserve their land and the available funding. In the past year, the program received \$75 million in requests for funding, while only \$16 million in awards were allocated. Funds from FRPP help leverage state funds and make possible the perpetual preservation of a larger number of properties. (*Source: American Farmland Trust)

**Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program - New York Easements
as of June 2003
Number, Acres, Easement Costs by County**

New York					
	Easement Cost			Federal Payment	
County	Acres	Total (\$)	Avg. (\$/acre)	\$	%
Cortland	358	808,000	2,257	153,250	19%
Erie	48	163,000	3,396	81,500	50%
Essex	1,315	725,690	552	238,735	33%
Monroe	225	1,810,817	8,048	300,000	17%
Onondaga	1,100	1,801,400	1,638	275,150	15%
Orange	442	1,880,000	4,253	215,500	11%
Suffolk	168	1,943,408	11,568	300,000	15%
Wayne	835	1,057,000	1,266	350,655	33%
Total*	4,491	10,189,315	2,269	1,914,790	19%
*Totals do not include FY 2002 pending easements					

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Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program - New York Easements as of June 2003
Counties with Acquired and Pending FRPP Easements



Trends in Population by County - New York 1990 to 2000 (Census Data)

